

## 1/15/2004 — 1/181st Infantry Celebrates 367th Anniversary

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**GUANTANAMO BAY, Cuba** — From colonial Indian wars to the Revolutionary War to the Global War on Terrorism, the 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry Regiment, based out of Worcester, Mass., has served for 367 years. This makes the unit one of the oldest battalions in not only the Army National Guard, but also the United States Army.

As mission requirements and training schedules allowed, members of the battalion performed ruck marches over the past month to commemorate the organization of their battalion on Dec. 13, 1636.

"We do the ruck march for the anniversary to honor not only the soldiers that have been in the regiment during the past 367 years, but also to honor the soldiers that are here right now," said Maj. George Harrington, the battalion operations officer. "We know that to get out here and do this in honor of the anniversary of the regiment honors both the soldiers that came before us and the soldiers that serve now."

The first ruck march participants were from the command staff. Lt. Col. Joseph Noonan, battalion commander; Maj. Francis Magurn, executive officer; Harrington; Command Sgt. Maj. Gregory Hurlburt, command sergeant major; and Master Sgt. Martin Litwiller, Intel NCO and acting first sergeant. They completed the ruck march early Saturday morning on December 13.

"We have to lead by example, be out front and show our soldiers that we aren't afraid to sweat and get as hot as they do," said Noonan.

"It's important for the command to be out doing everything that our soldiers are doing," said Hurlburt. "The commander and myself go on patrols with the soldiers so we feel their pain and they know we understand what they're going through."

Noonan asked them to do the ruck march because he felt that it was important to acknowledge and celebrate the battalion's anniversary. "It's important to show respect for our lineage - those soldiers who have gone before us - for our 367th birthday," he said.

It is a rich heritage they are celebrating. Originally organized as a militia for self-defense during the colonial period, every man between the age of 16 and 60 was required to enroll and attend monthly musters while providing their own weapons and equipment.

In the early 1700s they fought for the British crown in campaigns against the French in Canada.

In 1775, the regiment fought at Concord during the British retreat back to Charleston. For its efforts that day, the colors of the 181st carry the Lexington battle streamer. They are one of only three National Guard units that have been awarded this streamer. They also carry battle streamers earned during 1778 for service against the British in Rhode Island.

The regiment saw no action during the war of 1812, but they were ordered into service to protect Boston against an anticipated British attack.

In April 1861, the regiment was the first Union unit to mobilize, deploy and shed blood in the Civil War. After the Civil War, however, there was debate on whether the primary mission of the militia was to quell civil disturbances and enforce state law, or to train and act as a reserve of the Army.

The debate came to an end when National Guard units were mustered into federal service to go to the coast of Cuba and then to Puerto Rico during the Spanish-American War. It was a brief campaign, but the 181st Infantry Regiment realized, along with the entire Army National Guard, that its primary purpose was to serve as a reserve of the Army.

The regiment was called into federal service again on March 30, 1917, just days before World War I and served nearly two years. The unit served for a total of five years during World War II.

While the regiment was put on alert during the Vietnam War, members were not actually called to duty.

More recently, the 181st provided one company for a peacekeeping mission in Bosnia during Joint Endeavor. Then, after 54 years, the regiment was called to active duty in response of the events of Sept. 11, 2001. During the past two years the 181st has seen more active duty than at any other time since World War II. The unit is currently serving in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

So the infantryman completed their ruck marches in honor of their heritage and themselves. It was a chance to remember the past and prepare for the future. "It's a physical challenge that makes you practice one of your Army values: courage. You push your limits," said Spc. Juan Mateo, of A Company.